# Grounded and Abandoned Vessel in Coral Reef Ecosystems



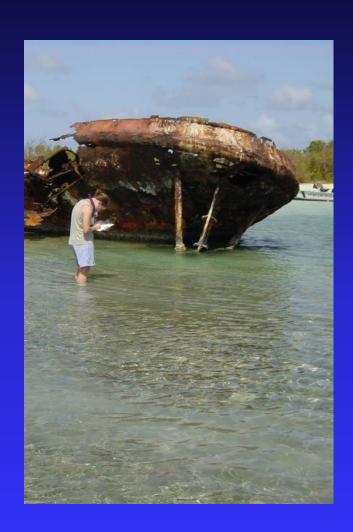
A Presentation Update to the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force
October 2, 2002
San Juan, Puerto Rico

#### Origin of Initiative

- Recent incidents highlighted gaps in legislative and funding framework.
- Draft US CRTF Resolution proposed investigation on:
  - I) Bonding requirement for fishing vessels
  - II) New legislation and funding in addition to OPA 90;
  - III) New legislation for coral reef damage assessment; and
  - IV) Federal assistance protocols to assist U.S. Flag islands.

#### Major Actions

- Federal working group and white paper to examine current legislative and funding framework.
- Workshops in Hawaii and Guam to better understand the issue in all U.S. Flag Pacific.
- Developed the Abandoned Vessel Inventory.



## General Workshop Findings

- Two grounding categories:
  - 1) existing vessels, and
  - 2) future groundings.
- Reported groundings in the Pacific are infrequent, 1-3 per jurisdiction per year; however grounding impacts may be locally significant.
- Many groundings involve fishing vessels that lack ability to pay for insurance.





# General Workshop Findings

- Except for incident where OPA 90 applies, Jurisdictions generally lack the funding and legal authorities to address groundings.
- Habitat injuries and removal costs generally increase over time as the vessel degrades.
- Prevention activities are an opportunity to reduce the frequency of vessel groundings. Alternatives

need to be more thoroughly explored.



#### Response to Resolution I

Bonding requirements for fishing vessels entering U.S. waters and ports adjacent to reefs

- Response
  - Federal legislation that only targets fishing vessels transiting near coral reefs may be unconstitutional.
  - This action may not apply to all vessels that are part of the problem.
- Opportunities
  - Jurisdictions could require local port/harbor agents to carry larger securities/bonds for their vessels in order to address possible damages from coral reef groundings.

#### Response to Resolution II

New legislation and funding in addition to OPA 90

- Response
  - ◆ Given the magnitude of the problem, as currently understood, and the political support needed, new federal legislation that involves funding or liability is not a viable alternative at this time.
  - Using existing authorities to the maximum extent possible and target existing funding is likely a more feasible alternative.
- Opportunities
  - ◆ The Coral Executive Order encourages US CRTF members to use their authorities to the maximum extent to protect reefs.
  - ◆ The Coral Reef Conservation Act contains an 'Emergency Assistance' provision.

#### Response to Resolution III

New legislation for coral reef damage assessment

- Response
  - ◆ New NRDA legislation would face the same challenges.
  - ◆ OPA '90-based NRDA protocols already exist
- Opportunities
  - Develop, adapt, and/or transfer existing protocols.
  - local decision making and flexibility in restoration
  - Develop local economic values for coral reef resources



#### Response to Resolution IV

Federal assistance protocols to assist U.S. Flag Islands

- Response
  - ◆ Response to this action does not require significant political support.
  - Work can be accomplished through existing partnerships.
  - Existing funds can be used to develop projects and provide training.
- Opportunities
  - Maximize networks and/or further develop working relationships through the area committees.
  - Increase education and prevention
     reef markers, Raycon beacons, etc.

### Accomplishments

- USCG removal of 10 sunken vessels in Guam after typhoon Chata'an and removal of derelict vessels in Puerto Rico.
- NOAA Abandoned Vessel Inventory and ground surveys in the Caribbean.
- NOAA and CNMI partnership and funding to assess and remove abandoned vessels.
- American Samoa developing local vessel grounding legislation.
- CNMI Coral Reef initiative to fund storm-preventative grounding measures.

#### Next Steps for Initiative

Existing Abandoned Vessels

- NOAA, DOJ and USCG to work with Islands to identify priority abandoned vessels, assess legality of removal, and identify potential sources of funding to plan and remove.
- NOAA, U.S. Coast Guard, and Islands to complete and ground truth Abandoned Vessel Database.



#### Next Steps for Initiative

#### Future Vessels that Ground

- Hold vessel grounding meetings in U.S. Caribbean Islands.
- Federal working group to complete white paper analysis, focusing on existing authorities and funding sources.
- All Islands, with technical assistance from NOAA, DOJ, and USCG, to pursue development of local legislation to allow for abandoned vessel removal.
- Island and Federal agencies to pursue maximizing networks and common protocols for response to vessel grounding incidents.
- Island and Federal agencies to investigate local mechanisms to help prevent future groundings.

#### Contacts

Doug Helton

NOAA ORR

**USCG HQ** 

Doug.Helton@noaa.gov

CDR Dan MacLeod

Jonathan Kelsey

Sylvia Quast

squast@doj.gov

U.S. DOJ

NOAA OCRM

dmacleod@comdt.uscg.mil Jonathan.Kelsey@noaa.gov

Lelei Peau American Samoa DOC Lelei.Peau@noaa.gov

#### Additional Information

Abandoned Vessel Inventory and Vessel Grounding Workshop Proceedings



http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/dac/vessels/documents